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ABSTRACT

A list of basic study practices and strategies, with examples and alternatives that focus on both receptive and productive skills and the value in interaction, is presented. The following hints are included: (1) don't study a language by yourself and in silence, but study aloud and with another person; (2) use the target language as much as possible, even if resorting to a pidgin form when necessary to avoid using English; (3) don't think that studying material without developing communication skills will be effective; (4) ask questions about grammar or vocabulary only in the target language; and (5) devise activities mutually beneficial to both study partners. Examples are given of mutually beneficial activities and of techniques for solving specific problems. The suggestions are based on the principles that pronunciation is the first thing to learn, all other skills and knowledge areas are only tools to develop speech skills, and the student himself must be aggressive in breaking out of the protective shell of English usage. (MSE)

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STUDY HINTS FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE

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1. DON'T study by yourself and in silence.

   Why not? You are trying to learn to speak the language, not just read it.

1A. DO study out loud, and whenever possible, with another person.

   Why? Because you can best learn to speak a language by speaking it; since you will, in a real situation, speak the language to another person, you should practice that right from the beginning.

2. DON'T use English when you study with another person.

   Why not? By using English, you reinforce English. By using the language, you reinforce the language.

2A. DO use the language AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE when you study with someone else, even if it is very difficult.

   Why? Because the language then truly becomes a tool for communication, not merely an academic subject which is useful only for very artificial situations.

3. DON'T be fooled into thinking that if you study the material, but never try to communicate, that you will learn the language.

   Why not? Because you never learn to swim until you get into the water; you never learn to ride until you get on a horse; you never learn a language until you start using it.

3A. DO be demanding of yourself and your partner. REQUIRE yourself to not use English unless you are drowning or bleeding to death.

   Why? Because using English is the easy way out; you will never really get into the language as long as you persist in using English, even

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for a moment.

4. DON'T ask questions about grammar or individual words when you study with your partner, unless you use the foreign language to ask.

   Why not? Because six year old children don't know grammar, but they speak well. An ungrammatical sentence spoken in the language is better than a perfect knowledge of grammar accompanied by silence in the language.

4A. DO try to devise activities which are mutually beneficial for both of you. There are four important skills you must learn: reading, writing, speaking and understanding. You can develop one skill at the same time your friend is developing another skill, if you will be imaginative.

   Why? Because your time is precious; you do not have time or interest to simply drill someone else while you are not learning yourself.

Examples:

1. Student #1 reads while Student #2 follows along in his book: quite wasteful.

   Both are learning to read, and Student #1 is practicing pronunciation, but nothing else.

2. Student #1 reads while Student #2 listens with book closed; better; Student #1 is learning to read and Student #2 is learning to understand, which is a more active skill
   than is learning to read.

3. Student #1 reads while Student #2 writes; better; Student #2 is now learning to understand and to write, both of which are more active than reading.

4. Student #1 reads while Student #2 writes and pronounces out loud;

better yet; Student #2 is now learning to understand, to write and to pronounce, which is the first step toward speaking; speaking is the most active of all the four activities. Student #1 is still not learning very much, however.

5. Student #1 reads while Student #2 writes in shorthand and pronounces each word out loud. Student #2 is now learning comprehension, speaking and although he is not learning writing, he is not altogether sacrificing writing, because as he writes the shorthand representation, he also visualizes the word (which is a form of writing); in addition, he is gaining in the ability to speak more rapidly.

6. Student #1 reads more rapidly, thus forcing Student #2 to write in shorthand more rapidly. Student #1 is practicing pronunciation while Student #2 is practicing rapid understanding, and rapid speaking. These prepare him for the time when he will encounter a native speaker who speaks at normal speed.

7. After Student #2 has written the shorthand version of the text, either he or Student #1 uses the shorthand cues to read the text back to the partner. This is one of the best activities of all, for it approaches normal speaking. The person who reads must <u>remember</u> (1) the sounds (2) the grammar (3) the vocabulary (4) the syntax and (5) the thought of the expression. The cues help him, but do not let him take the passive route which true reading does.

8. Student #1 looks at an English version of the text and translates it into the foreign language and pronounces the expressions in the language to Student #2, who writes in shorthand and pronounces (simultaneously) what he hears. This gives Student #2 all the

advantages of learning to speak, write and understand, while it gives Student #1 the advantage of learning to speak and translate from English. All of these are active activities and help both of you learn the language much faster.

These are ideal examples, and they do not always work. If they do not, you should try the following:

1. If Student #1 says a word which Student #2 does not understand, Student #2 should write out the word completely as best as possible, and then ask for help.
2. If you are trying to do a drill and cannot do it, translate the words into English. Except for this, try to use the language.
3. Never translate from the language into English just as a practice exercise. This is an absolutely wasteful activity and accomplishes nothing.
4. If, when you are trying to speak the language, you cannot think of the foreign language word, think of the word in English, then pronounce that word with the foreign accent. If that doesn't work, think of a three or four syllable English synonym for the word, and pronounce that.
5. Before you try to speak in the language, write out what you want to say. If you have to write it out in English first, do that, and then translate it into the language.
6. Do not simply begin speaking in English without making a real effort to speak the foreign language.

REMEMBER the following important ideas:

1. Pronunciation is the first thing that you must learn. Without

pronunciation, you will never learn the language. With it, there is no way you cannot learn it.

2. Speak Frenglish and Spanglish. Don't speak fast. Think for a second if you know the word in the foreign language before you go rushing headlong into English. Use English only if you are drowning or bleeding to death!

3. Visualize what you say and what you hear others say. If you do not understand, write what you hear; not with your pencil and paper, but with your finger on a table top. 80% of the time you will understand the word, as soon as you take the time to write it out in your mind.

4. Extremely important: Be imaginative; be aggressive; do not waste time.

5. Push your partner. Do not let him hem and haw around. Keep him moving along. Your time is precious, but more importantly, you are actually impeding progress when you mull too long over an expression. Say the first thing that comes into your mind--if it is wrong, it can be fixed, but nothing can be fixed if nothing is pronounced. Use every minute of your study time as effectively as possible.

6. Remember that the study of grammar and vocabulary MUST be subservient to the idea of breaking out of one's protective English shell. Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are merely means to an end--SPEECH. If one of these becomes more important than speaking, it must be eliminated! The one and only goal of the class, in the final analysis, is to speak the language: he who can speak can read, can understand and will have few problems writing. He who can read, however, can do nothing else. He who can write may be able to speak, particularly if he has always associated his writing activity with a

speaking or pronouncing activity, but without this, he will not be able to speak with any degree of ease. He who thinks he can understand but cannot speak is merely fooling himself, because he understands only some of the spoken word, and derives much of what he understands from contexts. The mouth and the hand holding the pencil must work together to get the brain into a position where it can think in the foreign language.